Conference on Disarmament

9 September 2014

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Note verbale dated 22 August 2014 from the Permanent Mission of Austria addressed to the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament transmitting the Austrian report in reply to the letter from the Office for Disarmament Affairs dated 20 February 2014 concerning resolution 68/49 entitled "Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations"

The Permanent Mission of Austria presents its compliments to the Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and has the honour to transmit herewith the Austrian report in reply to the request submitted by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in its letter ref. ODA/29-2014/MNDN of 20 February 2014 concerning resolution 68/46 entitled *"Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations"*.

The Permanent Mission of Austria would appreciate it if the paper could be issued as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and distributed to all member States and non-member participants of the Conference.

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Resolution 68/46 of the General Assembly

Comments by Austria

Austria would like to offer the following comments in reply to the request submitted by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in its letter ref. ODA/29-2014/MNDN of 20 February 2014 concerning resolution 68/46 entitled "**Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations**":

Executive Summary

1. Austria supports any approach that promises results in taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world free of nuclear weapons.

2. Austria was one of the co-initiators of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) according to resolution 67/56. Austria perceives the work and results of the Open-ended Working Group as a great success and promotes the consensus report of the Open-ended Working Group from its 2013 session, which offers a constructive starting point to building bridges and finding common for the way forward.

3. Austria calls for concrete work of the international community to work on the elements that are essential to complement the existing international legal framework in order to achieve and maintain a nuclear weapon free world and to consider the options of how to frame these elements into one or more instruments.

4. Austria supports all interim measures, be they of practical, political or legal nature. They can be unilateral, bilateral and multilateral measures and include transparency and building confidence efforts. However, such measures cannot replace the required legal action at a multilateral level.

5. Nuclear disarmament is about creating human security for all around the globe. All States have a legitimate interest in multilateral nuclear disarmament. Austria calls for a broad approach of multilateral nuclear disarmament, engaging the whole United Nations membership, international and regional expertise, academia, parliamentarians and civil society at large. The substantive work by the Open-ended Working Group underscored again the added value of an inclusive and participatory approach.

6. Austria promotes that the international community re-establishes its past focus on the humanitarian consequences and risks of nuclear weapons that underpin our collective efforts on nuclear disarmament, including in the framework of the NPT. Austria firmly believes that this discussion contributes decisively to change the discourse on nuclear disarmament, to include a human and cooperative security approach and to increase momentum. Austria has announced to host the third international conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons on 8 and 9 December 2014 in Vienna.

7. Austria continues to promote and support disarmament and non-proliferation education as well as high-level political events – such as the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on 26 September 2013 – for raising awareness and

educating on the importance of nuclear disarmament at all levels.

8. Austria encourages other states to engage all actors that can play a role in taking nuclear disarmament forward, including academia, parliamentarians and civil society at large.

I. Steps already taken

1. Austria was among the countries that initiated the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) according to resolution 67/56 to fill a void in the United Nations framework by creating a forum for open and interactive, substantive and constructive discussions on how to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament. Austria actively participated in the work of the Open-ended Working Group in Geneva during its 2013 session, including through chairing and facilitating individual sessions, contributing to discussions, submitting working papers, and through supporting the participation of civil society and (co-) sponsoring of side-events.

2. At the same time, Austria continued her active engagement in discussions in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, at the United Nations Disarmament Commission in New York as well as in the deliberations of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. In these and other frameworks, Austria has been promoting the Open-ended Working Group report and its elements.

3. At the sessions of the Preparatory Committee of the 2015 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Austria contributed with national reporting pursuant to Action 20 of the 2010 Action Plan as well as with working papers, side events and sponsorship of civil society on this issue.

4. Austria has been promoting that the international community re-establish its past focus on the humanitarian consequences and risks of nuclear weapons that underpin our collective efforts on nuclear disarmament, including in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Austria actively participated in the Oslo (February 2013) and Nayarit (March 2014) Conferences and supported the joint statements on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons at the United Nations and the NPT. Austria firmly believes that this discussion can contribute decisively to changing the discourse on nuclear disarmament to include a human and cooperative security approach and to increasing momentum for nuclear disarmament.

5. The Federal President of Austria participated in the 2013 High-Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament, where the urgency of nuclear disarmament regained its focus at the highest political level.

II. How to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations:

6. Austria promotes the report of the Open-ended Working Group (A/68/514) that offers a constructive way forward and reflects the group's focus on building bridges and finding common ground. Austria is willing to support any approach that promises results for taking multilateral nuclear disarmament forward. While the efforts to agree to and implement a work programme in the Conference on Disarmament must continue, the current situation requires additional action along the following lines as identified in the report of the Open-ended Working Group (A/68/514):

(a) Work on the elements that are essential to complement the existing international legal framework in order to ensure the achievement and maintenance of a nu lear weapon free world;

(b) Consider the options of how to frame these elements into one or more instruments, in accordance with the call by the United Nations Secretary General to develop treaty frameworks and proposals;

(c) Take complementary as well as interim measures, whether practical, political and/or legal;

(d) Acknowledge that all United Nations Members States and civil society at large have a legitimate interest in multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations and thus work towards an inclusive framework for discussions and negotiations;

(e) Ensure that a contribution can be made by various stakeholders to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. This includes international and regional organisations, academia, parliamentarians and civil society actors;

(f) Strengthen nuclear weapon free zones and establish new zones where they do not yet exist, including in the Middle East, as an important contribution to building a nuclear weapon free world;

(g) Further increase the understanding of the humanitarian impact and the risk of nuclear weapons and ensure that the nuclear weapon discourse is comprehensive and includes all aspects of these weapons. Considering the broad range of issues to be addressed, such discussions should not be limited to the nuclear disarmament forums alone. Austria has announced to host the third international conference on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons in Vienna on 8 and 9 December 2014;

(h) Promote and engage in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation education.